

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 OMB-01
TRSE-00 /097 W
-----095957 131242Z /41

O 131313Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1665
INFO USLO PEKING IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 10598

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: CH, UR, PBOR
SUBJECT: SOVIET AND CHINESE REACTIONS TO SINO-SOVIET
BORDER INCIDENT

SUMMARY: SOVIETS ARE ATTEMPTING TO DOWNPLAY RECENT SINO-
SOVIET BORDER INCIDENT. END SUMMARY.
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1. ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TASS SERVICE LATE MAY 12
CARRIED BRIEF TASS ANNOUNCEMENT ON SINO-SOVIET BORDER
INCIDENT. ANNOUNCEMENT, WHICH WAS ALSO READ OVER EVENING
TV NEWS PROGRAM AND SOVIET RADIO, CLAIMS THAT "A GROUP
OF SOVIET BORDERGUARD SEAMEN, WHO WERE PURSUING A
DANGEROUS AND ARMED CRIMINAL, HAVING MISTAKEN THE CHINESE

BANK FOR THE SOVIET KRESTOVSKIYE ISLANDS, LANDED THERE AND PENETRATED OVER A SMALL DISTANCE INTO CHINESE TERRITORY." ARTICLE HOLDS THAT "THE SOVIET SERVICEMEN DID NOT RPT NOT UNDERTAKE ANY ACTIONS INVOLVING CHINESE CITIZENS," BUT "IMMEDIATELY LEFT" AFTER DISCOVERING THAT THEY WERE ON CHINESE TERRITORY. ARTICLE CONCLUDES BY NOTING THAT REGRETS "HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED TO THE CHINESE SIDE."

2. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, SOVIETS HERE ARE ATTEMPTING TO PLAY DOWN THE INCIDENT. SOVIET ASIAN SPECIALIST VLADIMIR YAKOBOVSKIY TOLD EMBOFF MAY 12 THAT INCIDENT WAS MINOR. HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO FURTHER UPSET SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. IZVESTIYA CORRESPONDENT MATVEYEV BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT WITH A VISITING MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE SEMINAR, STATING THAT SOVIET UNION VIEWS THE INCIDENT AS A LOCALIZED ONE AND THAT THERE WERE NO CHINESE CASUALTIES. LATER HE SAID MAYBE A FEW PEOPLE WERE INJURED (THIS CONTRADICTED HIS EARLIER STATEMENT AND THE TASS ANNOUNCEMENT).

3. A LEADING AND RELIABLE WESTERN CORRESPONDENT DISCUSSED INCIDENT WITH VICTOR LOUIS AT MAY 12 DINNER PARTY. LOUIS SHOWED OUR SOURCE COPY OF THE ARTICLE ON THE INCIDENT HE INTENDED TO SEND TO LONDON EVENING NEWS AS WELL AS THREE OTHER FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS. SOURCE CONFIDENTIAL

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TOLD US THE FOLLOWING ABOUT ARTICLE'S CONTENTS AND LOUIS' OWN COMMENTS ABOUT THE BORDER INCIDENT:

-- LOCAL SOVIET ARMED FORCES OFFICIALS "MUCKED UP" EVERYTHING THROUGH THEIR IRRESPONSIBLE ACTIONS. TWO GUNBOATS PURSUED A LONE CHINESE WHO WAS SEEN RETURNING FROM SOVIET TERRITORY TOWARDS CHINESE TERRITORY. SOVIET TROOPS PURSUED THE CHINESE ONTO WHAT THEY THOUGHT WAS A SOVIET ISLAND. WHEN THEY STUMBLED ONTO MORE AND MORE CHINESE, THEY REALIZED THEY WERE IN CHINA AND THEY IMMEDIATELY RETURNED TO SOVIET SOIL.

-- NO CHINESE CASUALTIES RESULTED FROM THE RAID.

-- THE SOVIET TROOPS "PROFERRED" AN APOLOGY TO THE CHINESE "ON THE SPOT." SOURCE ASKED LOUIS IF APOLOGIES WERE ALSO OFFERED TO THE CHINESE IN PEKING. LOUIS RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY BUT REFUSED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE NATURE AND EXACT VENUE (E.G., AT MFA OR SINO-SOVIET BORDER TALKS) OF THE SOVIET APOLOGY.

-- LOUIS REFUSED TO RESPOND ABOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF A

SOVIET HELICOPTER IN THE INCIDENT. HE REPEATEDLY STRESSED THAT THE INCIDENT WAS A BIG MISTAKE CAUSED BY THE STUPIDITY OF LOCAL SOVIET OFFICERS. HE ALSO . EMPHASIZED HIS DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE CHINESE HAVE CHOSEN TO BLOW UP THE INCIDENT.

4. DURING MAY 12 DINNER PARTY CONVERSATION, CHINESE FIRST SECRETARY CHEN HSIAN-YU REACTED STRONGLY TO EMBOFF OBSERVATION THAT SOVIETS APPEAR TO BE PLAYING DOWN INCIDENT. HE CALLED THE INCIDENT "SERIOUS", SINCE IT INVOLVED AN ARMED INTRUSION OF SOVIET FORCES ONTO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 10598

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CHINESE TERRITORY AND AIR SPACE AND RESULTED IN INJURIES TO CHINESE CITIZENS. HE STATED THAT THE SOVIET ACTION WAS PROBABLY AIMED AT CAUSING FURTHER DAMAGE TO SINO-

SOVIET RELATIONS.

5. COMMENT: THE SOVIET PUBLIC OFFERING OF APOLOGIES IS
A RARE EVENT INDEED AND, COMBINED WITH COMMENTS OF
SOVIETS WHICH ARE REPORTED ABOVE, INDICATES THAT MOSCOW
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WOULD LIKE TO PUT THE INCIDENT TO REST. SOVIETS MAY
SHIFT THIS POSITION IF PEKING PERSISTS IN PRESSING
MOSCOW'S FEET TO THE FIRE, AS SEEMS TO BE LIKELY,
JUDGING FROM WIRE SERVICE REPORTS THAT PEKING HAS REJECTED
SOVIET APOLOGY.

6. FOR LONDON: WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR SENDING FULL TEXT
OF LOUIS ARTICLE WHEN PRINTED. TOON

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